

History of English Language and Literature
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Lecture 13b
The Rise of the Novel

Hello and welcome to yet another session of the course, History of English Language and Literature. Today's lecture we continue to discuss the rise of the novel and we have already noted some of the leading, we have already noted the life and works of some of the leading stalwarts who also had laid the foundations of novel in 18th century England. In this lecture we shall be continuing to look at some of the other major writers of those times who also contributed to the foundations of novel and also left an everlasting impact not just in England but also in the literature produced across the world.

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+Rev. Laurence Sterne (1713-68)

- "In 1759 the novel form was hit by a bombshell" –
The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy (the first two volumes)
 - Nine volumes – 1767

- "the strange work of a very strange man" (Hudson); "Sterne was our first English write to employ emotionalism as part of his regular literary stock-in-trade"
 - The story pre-dates Tristram's birth – digresses freely backwards and forwards in time – Tristram is conceived while the reader's attention is diverted – his birth in volume 3 – extremely complex time-scheme, a sense of timelessness – identity is unstable – against the dry intellectuality of the preceding generation
 - A medley of unconnected incidents, scraps of out-of-the-way learning, whimsical fancies, humour, pathos, reflection, impertinence, indecency
 - Deliberate oddity and carefully cultivated caprice
 - "nothing odd will do long. *Trinstram Shandy* did not last" - Johnson

Many critics and historians are of the opinion that in 1759 the novel form in England was hit by a bombshell. This event was nothing but the publication of this particular novel, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, written by Reverend Laurence Sterne who lived from 1713 to 68. *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* was a very different kind of literary event in England during that time. It did not, it could not be classified among the other novels of that period because it was very unconventional in multiple ways.

It also did not stick to any of the conventional understandings about the form of a novel, the form of a story or even the form of storytelling. This work was also quite tremendous in nature. It was a vast and expansive production. The first two volumes were published in 1759 but it ran into nine volumes altogether which was published by 1767. So this long and expansive work was seen with much skepticism during those times. It also did not, in terms of reception it did not rise to the occasion compared to the other works which were produced during those times.

In fact Hudson talks about *Tristram Shandy* as a strange work of a very strange man. He also notices that Sterne was one of our first English writers to employ emotionalism as part of his regular literary stock-in-trade. So though many have a lot of nice things to say about *Tristram Shandy*, it was, when it was published it was quite almost like a, almost like being hit by a bombshell as one of the historians have noted.

The story line was very unconventional though it spoke about the life and opinions of *Tristram Shandy*. The story line opened even before the birth of this particular hero, *Tristram Shandy*. So the story predates *Tristram's* birth in many ways. It digresses freely backwards and forwards in time. There is no linear relation. That was something that the readers of those times could not even get accustomed to initially. And about this hero's birth, it is quite interesting that he is in fact concede only much later and as and when the story progresses.

And it is also during a time when the author was trying to divert the reader's attention from preventing the reader from focusing on the events that led to *Tristram Shandy's* birth. So this hero, *Tristram's* birth happens only in volume 3. And altogether the novel passes through an extremely complex time-scheme to such an extent that it even gives a sense of timelessness at the end of it.

And the diction is also quite interesting. Instead of conveying meaning in the same way, it also forces the reader to get into a sphere of meaninglessness as well. The identity of the protagonist and the other characters are quite unstable and throughout the novel. And this was also a strong reaction against the dry intellectuality of the preceding generation, just like most of the writings of the later 18th century was, just like most of the writings of the later 18th century were.

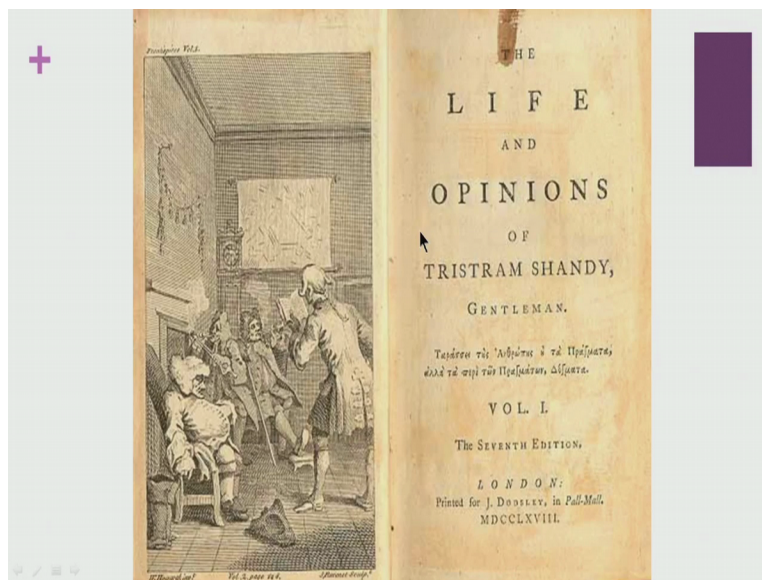
So in *Tristram Shandy* we find medley of unconnected incidents. It is very difficult to give one line summary of the novel. It also scraps out-of-the-way learning. It includes whimsical fancies,

a very different kind of dark humor, pathos, reflection, impertinence, indecency. So it is quite a medley of affairs so to speak. And this, many feel that this oddity which was part of Tristram Shandy was also deliberately cultivated and it was also very carefully devised.

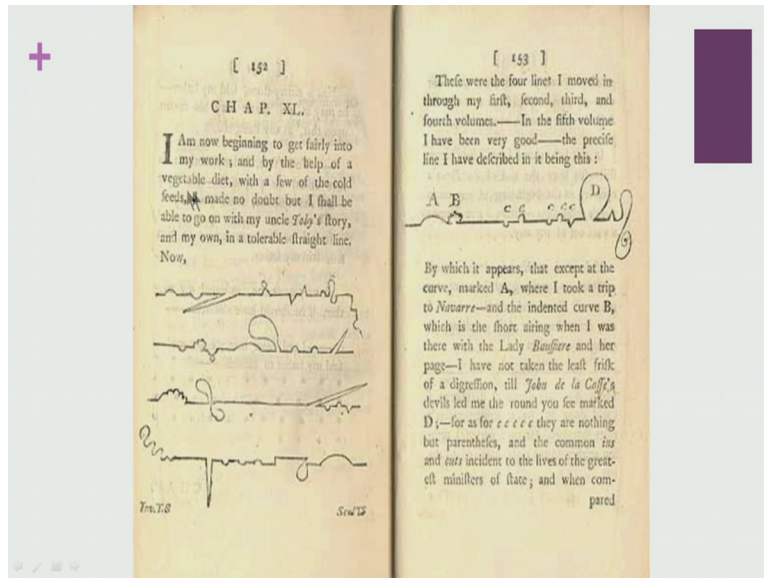
But critics of those times such as Samuel Johnson did not find this very enticing. Johnson wrote in one of his articles that nothing odd will do long, Tristram Shandy did not last. But however we later find, also find that history proved Johnson wrong in the 20th century. Tristram Shandy was much discussed over and over again. In fact if we talk about the kind of influence, the lasting influence and legacy that it left on the later writers, it would be quite surprising and stunning to notice that even writer such as Salman Rushdie have acknowledged the kind of influence that he derived, the kind of inspiration that he derived from works such as Tristram Shandy.

So there are also lot of literary arguments which put forward this theory that in terms of its art and treatment and its structure, Tristram Shandy almost qualifies as the first (05:44) novel though it was written way back in the 18th century.

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So to give you an idea of the kind of writings that, the kind of writing that Lawrence Sterne produced through *Tristram Shandy*, if you could take a look at this sample chapter, and allow me to read a little bit from this, “I am now beginning to get fairly into my work and by the help of a vegetable diet with a few of the cold feeds, I made no doubt but I shall be able to go on with my uncle Toby’s story, and my own in a tolerable straight line.” Now, and we notice that he begins to draw a series of lines in different formats.

And he also tries to attribute particular meanings to these different lines that he has drawn over here as he continues, “These were the four lines, I moved in through my first, second, third and fourth volumes. In the fifth volume I have been very good. The precise line I have described in it being this.” And we also find him giving another pictorial depiction of what he thinks as a structure through which his volumes have been moving. So if we take a quick look at this, we would also begin to understand how difficult it is to decide for this particular novel, how it defies almost all kinds of conventions of writing altogether. So in many ways this continues to be celebrated as a very different kind of work and also a singular work that departed from the conventions of those times.

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+ Sterne



- Irish novelist, an Anglican clergyman
- Sermons and memoirs
- Involved in local politics
 - Wrote political articles supporting Sir Robert Walpole
- 'a powerful clergyman, a mean tempered man and a rabid politician'
- *Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768)

We also need to know a little more about Reverend Lawrence Sterne. He was an Irish novelist, he was not of England origin. So this also though, this also leads us to be all the more convinced English literature from the 18th century onwards was not just a product of people who were born in England and who lived in England. But also was a contribution of all, contribution of the Great Britain put together.

So being of Irish origin, he also was a defender of the Irish politics and he tried to even for the cause of many things against Britain. And he was an Anglican clergyman as well. And he published many of his sermons and memoirs which were hugely popular during those times. And we also find him moving back to Ireland after period of brief stay in London because he did feel that he carried the bag and baggages of the Irish identity in him. He was much involved in local politics and it also talks about, it also tells us a very different thing about the kind of man that he was.

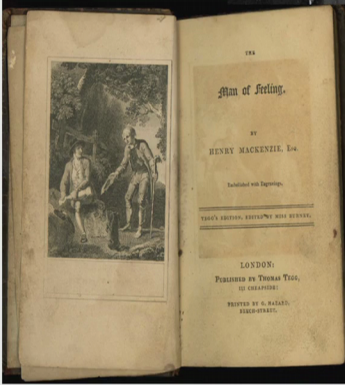

He wrote many political articles supporting Sir Robert Walpole. So though he was of Irish origin, we find him wholeheartedly supporting certain kinds of political turns and political affiliations even within Britain. About him it is generally said that he was a powerful clergyman, a mean tempered man and a rabid politician. So it was quite an unlikely kind of combination for writer of those times and maybe that is why he also ended up producing this very different kind of novel named Tristram Shandy. He also had produced another work, Sentimental Journey

Through France and Italy in 1768 which did not however enjoy the kind of reputation that Tristram Shandy had in the later centuries.

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+ Henry Mackenzie (1745-1831)

- *The Man of Feeling* (1771) – published anonymously
- A short novel - the form of a mutilated script – 'scattered chapters, and fragments of chapters' – disjointed and episodic story – experimental abandoning of the traditional novel form
- A new kind of hero – Harley, a man who cries – the move towards the acceptance of 'feminine' elements in the masculine hero – exploring and defining sexual roles in society
- Wolfgang von Goethe acknowledged the influence of this novel on his *Sorrows of a Young Werther* (1774) – a sensitive, suffering and suicidal hero



Another important and significant writer of the 18th century was Henry Mackenzie who lived from 1745 till 1831. His most important work, *The Man of Feeling* was published anonymously in 1771. *Man of Feeling* was unlike many other novels of those times, it was fairly short novel. It is also useful to remember that most of the novels produced in the 18th century were vast and expansive in nature and it was almost impossible to finish reading them.

And also that was a reason why many of those novels did not enjoy much popularity in the later times. But unlike these works, *Man of Feeling* was quite a short work. But however it was also quite conventional in the writing style and also in the treatment of the theme. It was in the form of a mutilated script. Some historians have noted down that it was in the form of scattered chapters and fragments of chapters. So the entire story reads like disjointed and episodic set of events.

And he also said to have experimented a lot with the form of writing because he must have deliberately discarded the traditional novel writing form. This also reminds us that novel was rather a free form for anyone to experiment in many different ways. So since it was free from the rigidities of any form of classicist model, we find the novel is experimenting in many different

ways. This also had led to the thriving of the genre and also to the development of the genre in multiple ways in the coming centuries.

Man of Feeling was very different in terms of the subject matter as well. It also presented a new kind of hero named Harley and he was a man who cries and in that sense it completely defied all kinds of conventional images of masculinity. So this moved towards the acceptance of the feminine elements in the masculine hero, rather the so called feminine elements in the masculine hero was very interesting for the English public then. Many also rejected it because it made them rather uncomfortable to read about a hero who cries.

But nevertheless Mackenzie's contribution in exploring and redefining the gender roles and the sexual roles in the English society cannot be neglected at all. Man of Feeling was huge success not just in England but also in different parts of Europe. Significantly the German writer, Wolfgang Goethe acknowledged the influence of this novel on his own work, Sorrows of a Young Werther published in 1774. So in Goethe's work he had portrayed a sensitive and suffering but suicidal hero.

And he as well as many other European writers have talked about their indebtedness towards Mackenzie and his Man of Feeling. And also how Mackenzie loved the portrayal of a different kind of a hero who did not fit into the stereotypical images of the 18th century.

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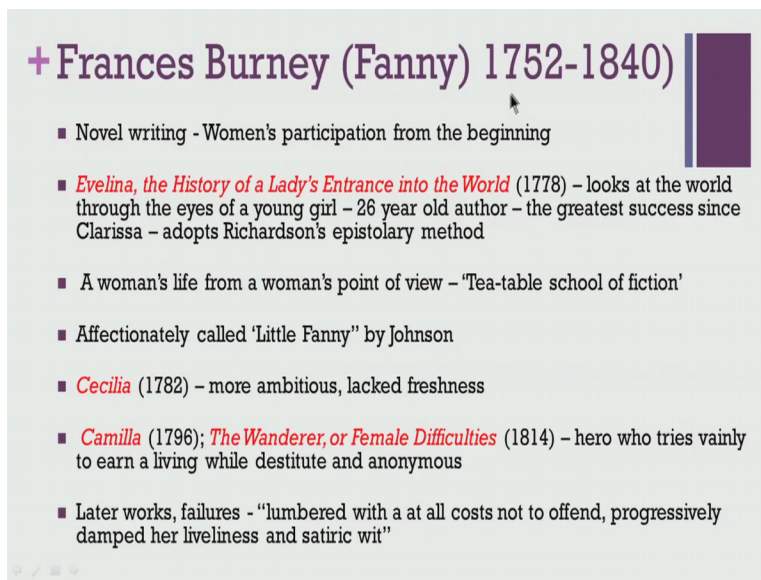
- A **Scottish** lawyer, an ardent **Tory**
 - Comptroller of Taxes for Scotland - Well-paid job, allowed him to pursue writing
- "**Addison of the North**"
- Opposed the French Revolution
- **The Mirror** – a weekly periodical (Jan 1779 – May 1780)
- **The Prince of Tunis** (1773) – drama
- **The Works of Henry Mackenzie** (1807) – surreptitiously compiled
- Nicknamed 'man of feeling' – but in reality a hard-headed man of affairs with a kindly heart
- *Account of the Life and Writings of John Home, Esq* (1822)

If we talk about the personal attributes of Henry Mackenzie, he was also of Scottish origin. He practiced law for some time. He was a very well-known lawyer. He was also ardent Tory supporter. He worked as the Comptroller of Taxes for Scotland for a while which was very well paying job. It said that it also allowed him to pursue other kinds of interest such as writing. Because of the kind of supreme command that he had over language, he was also known as the Addison of the North. He severely opposed the French Revolution.

It is also useful to notice, it is also useful to note that most of the writers of those times had one opinion or the other about the French Revolution because it was major event which shaped and reshaped not just their political understandings but also challenged the ways in which they were approaching the state, the nation and also the relationship with the citizens of the country. So in that sense having an opinion about the French Revolution or openly taking one particular side was seen as the mark of intellectual liberty and also sign of the boldness through which they could articulate their particular political preferences.

He ran a periodical during this, that time, The Mirror which ran from Jan, January 1779 till May 1780. He also had produced a play in 1773 titled The Prince of Tunis. He also surreptitiously compiled his own work and published it in 1807 titled The Works of Henry Mackenzie. Henry Mackenzie was often nicknamed by friends and family as man of feeling. But in reality he was a hard-headed man of affairs with a kindly heart. And this also had lent a very different kind of temperament to his novel. He also had published in 1822, Account of the Life and Writings of John Home. The presence of the Scottish writers alongside the English writers also tells us over and over again about the significance of the Scottish Enlightenment on the development of prose and other kinds of writings in the 18th century England.

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+ Frances Burney (Fanny) 1752-1840

- Novel writing - Women's participation from the beginning
- *Evelina, the History of a Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778) – looks at the world through the eyes of a young girl – 26 year old author – the greatest success since *Clarissa* – adopts Richardson's epistolary method
- A woman's life from a woman's point of view – 'Tea-table school of fiction'
- Affectionately called 'Little Fanny' by Johnson
- *Cecilia* (1782) – more ambitious, lacked freshness
- *Camilla* (1796); *The Wanderer, or Female Difficulties* (1814) – hero who tries vainly to earn a living while destitute and anonymous
- Later works, failures - "lumbered with a at all costs not to offend, progressively damped her liveliness and satiric wit"

It is also very useful and appropriate at this point to highlight the participation of women in terms of the emergence of the novel. Novel writing unlike the other kinds of genres it ensured the participation of women right from the beginning. We find that women were allowed to read, they were one of the major consumers of novels. They were also loved to write for other men and women. So one of the most important writers of this period was Frances Burney also known as Fanny Burney. He lived from 1752 till 1840.

His, her most important work is considered as *Evelina, the History of a Lady's Entrance into the World* published in 1778. This work looks at the world through the eyes of a young girl. The work was written, *Evelina* was written when Frances Burney was barely 26 years old. It was considered as the greatest success since *Clarissa*, Richardson's *Clarissa*.

We also find Frances Burney adopting the epistolary method from Richardson. She was heavily influenced by the other writer such as Fielding and Smollet as well but we do see that she was capable enough to develop her own style of writing and also come up with her own subject matter. When one talks about *Evelina*, it is important to note the significance that it had not just as literary event but also as a historical event because it was the portrayal of women's life from women's point of view.

It is also said to have classified under the Tea-table school of fiction because it was seen mostly as feminine. And it is also important to note that Frances Burney was affectionately called Little

Fanny by Johnson. He is said to have promoted Fanny Burney quite a lot. Though some of the writers are also of the opinion that he, Johnson had a very condescending relationship with Frances Burney. Nevertheless he did promote her in the London circles during those time and she did enjoy some amount of good reputation and fame through her novels.


Her second work, Cecilia published in 1782 was more ambitious kind of work but however it lacked the freshness that the first one Evelina had. And she also went onto publish few more works such as Camilla in 1796 and The Wanderer or Female Difficulties in 1814. So in this the main protagonist is a hero who tries vainly to earn a living while being destitute and anonymous in London. Though Evelina was a huge success when it was published, we find that Frances Burney somehow missed the mark in the, in her later works.

So most of her later works were failures and she did not really leave a lasting reputation with the other works. And it is also said that she was forced to temper down her wit and her sarcasm in her subsequent work in order to preserve most of the good relations that she had with the government and also with the other important men in London during those time. In fact one of the later historians has written this thing about Fanny Burney that she lumbered with at all costs not to offend, progressively damped her liveliness and satiric wit. So we do find her trying to taper down the kind of sharp wit and sarcasm that she had and this also affected the kind of writings that she was capable of producing.

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+ Sarah Fielding (1710-1768)

- Sister of Henry Fielding
- *The Adventures of David Simple* (1744) – published anonymously – successful, praised by even Richardson
 - 2nd edition within 10 weeks, trans into French and German
- *The Governess, or The Little Female Academy* (1749) – a novel aimed at children



When one talks about the important female writers of those times, it is also important to take a look at Sarah Fielding who lived from 1710 till 1768. She was a sister of Henry Fielding. She also had authored her first book in 1744, *The Adventures of David Simple*. This was initially published anonymously. In fact most of the writers chose to publish their works anonymously during the time because it was not yet mandatory or not yet become a fashion to sign with one's own name after the work was published.

The Adventures of David Simple was very successful. It was praised even by Richardson given that Richardson was a rival of Sarah Fielding's brother, Richard Fielding. *The Adventures of David Simple* was so successful that it, the second edition had to be brought out within 10 weeks. It was also translated into languages such as French and German. So it also enjoyed much popularity in different parts of Europe as well. She also produced her second work, *The Governess or The Little Female Academy* in 1749. This was a novel aimed primarily at children.

So this work was also hugely interesting during those times. And it also again spoke about being woman in the English society and also gave a very different point of view compared to the male dominated writing styles of those times. So in multiple ways novel opened up a new sphere not just for the men who came from non-aristocratic backgrounds but also for women who otherwise had little or no access to the public space in England.

So from the 18th century onwards we do notice that having woman writer is no longer a rarity. Accepting that woman is entitled to earn a livelihood through writing is not again a rarity from the 18th century onwards. So with this we also come to the understanding that whatever we began talking about the novel in the introductory session, about the democratic nature of the novel and the ways in which it catered to a wider reading public cutting across class and gender, it was not just mythical or hypothetical proposition but was really a reality itself.

So from this time onwards with the foundations that the 18th century laid in terms of the novel, we also find that the later 18th century began to signal a transition towards a romantic revival. So the foundations which were laid as part of the novel writing, as part of the novel, the reception of the, reception of novels it was quite instrumental in facilitating this transition because romantic revival was again all about rejecting the old traditions and celebrating the triumph of the new.

So in multiple ways novel was not just about the art of fiction, the art of writing fiction but it was also about trying to promote a newer form of understanding literature and also about challenging whatever was seen as conventional, whatever was seen as acceptable in different ways. So moving away from tradition, we do find that the English literature was all set to conquer newer fields and newer forms of writing from the late 18th century and especially from the early 19th century onwards.

So having said that it is also time for us to wrap up our discussion of the 18th century and also to bring to your notice that there are few more miscellaneous writers whom we shall be covering in the next lecture. For this lecture that is all we have for today. Thank you for listening and I look forward to seeing you in the next lecture.